

THE INQUIRER

INCORPORATING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND THE UNITARIAN HERALD

ORGAN OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY

AND FREE RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP

ESTABLISHED IN 1842

REGISTERED AS A NEWSPAPER

No. 5950

Saturday, July 21, 1956

Price Threepence

FLOATING VOTERS

It is sometimes registered, as a complaint, that Unitarianism (and, for that matter, Liberal Christianity in general) is an amorphous faith, and that, without the rigid dogmas, crystallized in creeds and catechisms, which characterized the more orthodox Churches, the churches of the freer faith have little to offer even the interested stranger. Probably most Unitarian laymen (and certainly all Unitarian ministers) have had inquiries from strangers who say: "But what do you believe?" And probably all Unitarian Churches have the experience of occasional visits from newcomers, who at first give the impression that they are interested, but who, after a few weeks or at most months of more or less regular attendance, fall away again; then, after awhile, our services know them no more.

No doubt this experience is common to places of worship of all kinds; there are "floating voters" in religion as well as in politics, and there are many people, vaguely interested in religious questions, who are trying to find a spiritual home. Such people will be inclined to attend almost any place of worship for a time, hoping to gain the mental and spiritual satisfactions out of its services which the great historic bodies of Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism have not given them.

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All that may well be granted; but, all the same, the feeling remains that Unitarian Churches suffer more of this drifting in and out than do most religious bodies. Why should this be so? Why should so many promising newcomers, brought to a church, it may be by an Advance Campaign, gradually drift away? Why should most places of worship be maintained, for the most part, by a loyal core of old members, whereas the new converts are so often held for only a short time?

These are important questions, and on the provision of adequate answers to them the whole future of the Unitarian and Free Christian Movement may well depend.

Part of the reason may be unavoidable. It may be that any kind of free faith, without the broad machinery of dogma laid down from above by a College of Cardinals or a Bench of Bishops, is too difficult, needs too much in the way of independent thought, for some people. If that be true, there is little that can be done about it. Some friends ask on occasion for a statement of Unitarian beliefs, for what may be called a "Unitarian Creed". In the nature of the Unitarian attitude, such a statement is very difficult to provide. That interesting document, *A Free Religious Faith*, a book prepared, after due thought, by a group of clear thinkers, shows that a really detailed and a really agreed statement of Unitarian ideas can be made readable and understandable; such independent efforts as Dr. Alfred Hall's *The Beliefs of a Unitarian* show, likewise, that there are, within the Ministry of the Unitarian

and Free Christian Churches, men of courage and integrity, who can express their ideas fearlessly and well. But, at the same time, these statements do not altogether meet the request for a Unitarian creed for which ministers are sometimes asked.

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It may, indeed, be doubted whether such a request can ever be met—and for this reason. A religious attitude of mind (and it may be that Unitarianism is more an attitude of mind than an actual code of belief) which, while holding fast to certain eternal verities, accepts the findings of modern scholarship and modern science, can never crystallize or fossilize in a creed, because, even were a creed for Unitarians prepared to-day by a Committee of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, it would no longer be binding (it might even no longer be valid) for the Unitarians and Free Christians of fifty years hence.

The sensation arising from the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has upset many orthodox Christians; it has also (as the Rev. L. A. Garrard has pointed out) upset many equally orthodox anti-Christians. The only people who have been in no way worried by these remarkable discoveries have been the religious liberals, because their religious outlook is such that it can take even the most revolutionary of discoveries in its stride. Similarly exciting discoveries may lie in the months and years ahead of us—the theories of science, the theories (even) of theology, may undergo revolutions—and these things may render the wordings of the orthodox creeds even more out-of-date than they are to-day. But they will not render out-of-date the spiritual efforts of a free faith, not tied to a creed or anchored to a catechism. If Unitarians feel that they have managed to get hold of an aspect of divine reality which, though sometimes difficult if not impossible to put into words, has a validity in a wide variety of religious backgrounds, then they will not be unduly disturbed by changes, from whatever quarter they may originate.

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This is not fashionable doctrine in our day; the findings of thinkers like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner are more likely to get support in theological circles. But fashions in ideas, like fashions in clothes, pass and change. One of the greatest theologians of our time, Rudolf Bultmann, has pointed out clearly enough that the old literal idea of a three-story universe, with Hell in the basement, the Earth on the ground floor, and Heaven upstairs (and this was for long literally accepted), is what has made much of conventional religion meaningless and unreal to twentieth-century minds. This kind of picture of the universe is what has become fixed and firm in the words and the ideas of the creeds; and it is because the

creeds are so fixed and firm that a Unitarian creed is well-nigh if not quite impossible.

What, then, of our inquiring friends? What of those who drift into churches, and, after a few weeks or months, drift out again? What of the requests which sometimes come from within Unitarian bodies, for a precise and exact statement of belief? Surely the answer must be that a free church is a place of spiritual experiment, that it must be open to inquiring souls of many different schools of thought, and that a fixed and rigid creed, by its very existence, tends to exclude some who might otherwise feel at home.

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This is not to say that there are not some questions on which Unitarians should be agreed. All Unitarians would agree that racial or religious persecution is wrong; all Unitarians would agree that the present political divisions between East and West are wrong. But it should be noted that these are matters of *applied* religion, not of *pure* religion. It should therefore be clear that even though men and women of a free faith may sometimes disagree on some of the details of that faith in its theological aspects, they will still be able to agree on its applications in the practical walks of life. If all religious people agreed to ban atomic warfare; if all religious people agreed that the colour bar, and all that it implies, is an evil thing; if all religious people agreed that persecution or dismissal from a job on account of political beliefs is unjustifiable; then there is no doubt that the world would be a far better place.

As long as that kind of thing can be brought about; as long as Unitarians and Free Christians are agreed in support of progressive causes; as long as they all unite in breaking down barriers between men: so long will they be doing a worthwhile task in the world.

But if a formal creed be made for Unitarians; if they be asked to sign on a dotted line of belief; if the orthodox creeds see an unorthodox creed in opposition; then, not merely will old barriers not be broken down, but new barriers will be in the process of erection; and that would be the worst possible thing for the world, and for the Churches themselves.

(Contributed)

MIRACLES

By A. Philip Hewett

Why, who makes much of a miracle?

As to me I know of nothing else but miracles

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,

Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,

Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,

Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,

The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the

waves—the ships with men in them,

What stranger miracles are there?

SO wrote Walt Whitman, expressing the wonder and reverence which are the keynote of all religion. Is not this what is meant by becoming as a little child in order to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven? In equally memorable words Thomas Traherne declared, "You never enjoy the world aright, till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars To a mind like this, the whole of life is one ever-renewed miracle.

In this sense it is a poor and stunted mind indeed that rejects miracles. But we are only playing with words if we suppose that this is the sense in which the word "miracle" has been traditionally used and understood in religion. A silent awe before the majesty of the starry sky, the germination of the seed, the sweep of the tides: this is most emphatically not what miracle has meant in religious history.

In the language of theology, miracles are supernatural interferences with the natural order, to produce effects which either directly violate that order or go beyond those which it could by itself produce. An example of the first type would be the walking of a man or the floating of an iron axe-head on the surface of water. An example of the second would be the immediate recovery of someone who was critically ill. In the second case, unlike the first, the natural order could probably explain the event, but not the immediacy with which it was produced. But in both cases the direct intervention of God to produce the effect is supposed.

It is at once apparent that there is no connection between miracle in the strict sense and Whitman's marvelling at the natural order itself. The whole idea of miracle is incompatible with a faith in an unvarying natural order such as underlies modern science. An orderly universe is the first postulate of science—and of Unitarianism. The Unitarian attitude towards miracles is therefore one of straightforward rejection.

Those who defend the idea of miracle have no easy task in these days. It is argued in some quarters that we do not know the limits of the natural order, and that fuller knowledge might show that what we think to be out of accord with natural law is actually in full harmony with it. But this does not save the idea of miracle. An appeal to ignorance is not an appeal to miracle. As one exposition of Catholic teaching bluntly puts it, "to bring miracles under a law not yet understood is to deny their existence".

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Another recent tactic has been to argue that the whole notion of "natural law" is misleading: that what we dignify by this term is simply a sequence of observed regularities. We trust those regularities, but if our trust lets us down on one occasion we cannot say that any "law" has been broken. But this again is only playing with words. Our whole world-view is based on faith in one natural order, whether we speak of "laws" or "observed regularities". It cannot be shown that this faith has ever yet let us down, though there is, of course, much of which we are still ignorant.

But this faith is a comparatively recent one. The ancient world, from which the idea of miracle comes, was one in which many natural regularities had not yet been discovered. Experience pointed to irregularities as much as to regularities in nature. For example, an eclipse would not be, as to-day, something predictable and therefore expected, but something altogether out of the natural order of things and to be regarded as a supernatural portent.

In such an age the existence of miracle-stories was no embarrassment to thinking people. Miracles were looked upon, as they still are by those who believe in them, as supernatural signs manifesting the power of God or guaranteeing the authenticity of a particular revelation. Thus, stories of the miraculous births of Plato, Buddha, Christ, Zoroaster and Confucius enhanced the significance of these persons and gave them greater authority. The absence of such stories would have made it more difficult for their followers to maintain their status.

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Some miracle-stories can be rationally reinterpreted: that is to say, explained away as events which were not miracles at all. Our increased knowledge of the powers of the mind over the body enables us to give such an account of some so-called miracles of healing. But it would be a rash person who would try to extend this process to all the miracles narrated in the world's Scriptures. Those accounts were written by people who believed in miracles and for people who believed in miracles.

It has been said that unless we accept or reinterpret rationally all the miracles recorded in the Bible we are calling the writers deliberate liars, who would thereby be as disqualified from writing on moral and spiritual subjects as from

writing on history. This shows a complete lack of understanding of the world of thought in the ancient East. The miracle-stories were not deliberately invented. They grew, as a plant grows when it is sown in the right soil. Even in this country "apocryphal stories" go around concerning well-known persons, usually with only the slenderest foundation in fact. Again, in the ancient world dreams and visions were commonly reported, and there was no sharp line of distinction between them and the world of fact. Why should there have been? Where was the distinction between a mirage in the desert and a vision on the one hand or a real city on the other?

The Bible has to be read as the product of such an age and place, not of our twentieth-century world of experiments, dictaphones and "hard facts". Unitarians do not evade, as many in other churches do, the fact that the miracle-stories are an inescapable part of the Bible and that they are equally inescapably incredible to the modern mind.

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It would be difficult to estimate how many people in the world still believe in miracles. It might be a majority. The Catholic church demands attested proof of at least four authentic miracles before canonizing a new saint. Most Protestants would reject such miracles as these, but accept those attributed to Elijah and Jesus and Peter. This, to Unitarians, seems inconsistent. Either you accept miracles or you do not. If you accept the turning of water into wine at Cana or the bodily resurrection of Jesus, then surely there can be no good reason for denying the dancing of the sun at Fatima or many of the myriads of miracles attributed to the saints of Hinduism and Buddhism.

The sense of wonder is fundamental to religion. But that sense is heightened when it does not have to confine itself to a few alleged violations of the natural order, but can embrace the whole of life within its scope.

COMMENT

Hebrew Prophecy

THE question of the uniqueness of Hebrew prophecy has often been raised. The tendency of orthodoxy, of course, is to assert that uniqueness, for by the use of false canons of interpretation the utterances of the Hebrew prophets are made to support the framework of Christian theology, and it is very easy under such circumstances to overlook the real meaning and significance of prophecy and to confuse it with what is peculiar and adventitious in a particular environment.

Some scholars have tried to show that there was something akin to Hebrew prophecy in ancient Egypt, although they have not had much success in their efforts. We know, however, that there was about the time of King David, a closer relationship in Egypt between religion and morals than prevailed in Palestine, and we have traces there, too, of finer, purely religious ideas. It is to be noted, too, that Elijah does not seem to have regarded the prophets of Baal, introduced by Queen Jezebel from Phoenicia, as being in any essential way different from himself. They were the prophets of a foreign God, whilst he was the prophet of the more powerful God of Israel—that was all. But prophecy in Phoenicia never went, so far as we know, beyond the stage they had reached in Elijah's time. Sir Alfred Zimmern in his work on the Greek Commonwealth, says that there was a development of prophecy in Greece, in connection with the Oracle at Delphi, corresponding to the development of Hebrew prophecy. In that service, he says, there was a body of spiritual innovators, whose very names have passed away; yet prophets there must have been as truly inspired as those of Israel. In spite of the priests who succeeded them, their work lived on; "the fire of their spirits illumined and warmed the whole religious life of the Hellenes, and we find echoes of their voices in later writers like Aeschylus and Plato".

Protestants in Spain

The moving appeal to General Franco, made by a group of pastors representing Protestant Churches in Spain, will it is hoped receive some attention. From the appeal itself it seems as though some of the worst treatment to which Protestants are subjected comes from the fact that the law itself is ill-defined, so that they are at the mercy of local police and provincial executives. Great obstacles are placed in the way of Protestant marriages and education; and the holdings of Protestant services often depend directly on provincial governors and the police, acting by virtue of simple denunciations made by bigoted Roman Catholics. A complaint is made, too, of the closing of the Protestant seminary at Madrid by order of the Ministry of the Interior. In view of the confiscation of Bibles and other literature, it is to be expected that a special civil censorship, competent to judge whether such literature is prejudicial to the security of the State or the established Church, be set up. The last appeal is that necessary measures be taken to secure that social aid should be available for Protestants, without requiring the agreement of the Roman Catholic priests. It is amazing that such an appeal, not for any privilege, but for elementary rights that have been recognized here for more than two centuries should be necessary.

It has been said that "every Spaniard is obliged to be either a Roman Catholic or an agnostic; halfway houses are not tolerated". At the same time, intellectuals who do not give an implied submission to the Church are almost universally distrusted and so exert little influence. "They are equated with 'liberals,' freemasons and other 'traitors to the Spanish genius'". It is, however, an extraordinary fact, widely borne witness to, that although the overwhelming majority of Spaniards are devout Catholics, anti-clericalism is fairly strong.

Segregation in the United States

The convention of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People that has just been held at San Francisco has shown dissatisfaction at the slowness of the Southern States to implement the judgment of the Supreme Court against segregation. The judgment, indeed, seems to have brought to a head all the influences that maintain strict segregation, and those in power now seem bent on finding legislative and legal ways of circumventing the purpose of the decision. Those who feel that the desired reforms can come only gradually and piece meal are afraid that the impatience of such conventions can only hinder the attainment of effective equality with the white man. Such reforms as Negroes shopping in high-class Atlanta stores, a Negro woman being given the title of "Miss" in an Atlanta paper, and Negroes and whites standing together in lines at post-office windows are not only typical of advances made since the war, but are also indications of the strength of the feeling against the advance of the Negroes.

One cause of the anti-Negro feeling is the widespread poverty among whites. A poll-tax is imposed in Southern States to keep out Negro voters, but according to John Gunther, it excludes a greater number of whites—six millions of them. It is a bitter solace to these poor whites that Negroes are still kept in an inferior position. It is one of the tragedies of the situation that the duplication of services made necessary by segregation is itself one of the main causes of the poverty of the South. "Gradualness" seems the only possible policy under the circumstances. As the president of a Negro university put it: "There are easier ways to take a fortress than by direct assault." Quite apart from the fact that all the time there is gradual advancement in the status of the Negro, there is one other fortunate circumstance in the American Negro's struggle that distinguishes it from the struggle of the African in his own continent—no one, white or black, in the United States has any wish to give the struggle an international complexion.

Commentator.

IMPRESSIONS OF A VISIT TO FRANCE

(Continued)

By A. B. Downing

WHILST in Paris I seized the opportunity of visiting the Protestant theological college, "the Free Faculty of Protestant Theology," which trains ministers of both orthodox and liberal persuasions. Like most French institutions it is surrounded by a high wall, inside which however is a pleasant courtyard with the students' hostel on one side and the faculty lecture rooms, offices and library on the other. The rooms are serviceable rather than sumptuous. There are some 20 students in residence and 20 external ones. The Faculty is not an integral part of Paris University but is connected with it in much the same relation as M.C.O. is connected with Oxford. There is a resident warden, a minister, and an academic head, the Dean, who is responsible for the students' training. The course lasts four years, the first two of which are devoted to the bachelor's diploma in theology and the second two to the "license en théologie". The student who showed us round was a convert from Roman Catholicism, such conversion apparently being not uncommon. The previous night this young man had been locked in a trunk and delivered with great pomp and ceremony to an unknown address in Paris but his resources had, it seemed, been quite adequate to the occasion. The resident warden, whom I did not meet, must, I imagine, be a gentleman whose heart and head are well able to cope with such situations! In one of his books Pastor Marchal points out that the Faculty, in the Boulevard Arago, is geographically located equidistant from a school, a convent, a prison, the Observatory and a railway station!

In France there are three centres for the training of Protestant ministers: at Paris, Montpellier and Strasbourg. The Paris institution was founded soon after the Franco-German War of 1870 to replace Strasbourg which came under German occupation and some very eminent Protestant scholars of international reputation have been associated with it since that time.

A Glimpse of Protestantism in Touraine

After a busy and tiring week in the capital it was greatly refreshing to visit the historical region of the "Châteaux de la Loire," the old kingdom of Touraine with its rolling and luscious countryside and its innumerable historical castles and buildings. We stayed near Tours where there is a flourishing Protestant congregation which was celebrating, during our visit, the fourth centenary of Protestantism in the district. Protestantism in France is less separatist than it is in England and has nothing equivalent to our dissenting denominations. Even so its history is sufficiently exciting, not to say sanguinary, and there were some dismal records of religious persecution in the Protestant Exhibition which was organized at the Tours Museum specially for the fourth centenary celebrations.

The President of the French Protestant Federation, the distinguished Pastor Boegner, came down from Paris to associate himself with the event. At a public meeting attended by 300-400 people he gave a lecture on "Reverence for Life". His treatment of the subject was striking and merits a few notes. He pointed out that reverence for life does not merely mean respect for purely physical existence. The examples he gave of the way in which this spiritual principle is dishonoured are worth recording. They were, of course, amplified with all the resources of French eloquence.

A Lively Social Influence

Firstly abortion, whether legalized or not. In one Swiss town—in Switzerland the question of abortion is much discussed—the number of legal abortions for the past quarter actually exceeded the number of registered births. Pastor Boegner was appalled at the light-hearted way in which these social facts are taken for granted.

Secondly euthanasia, however considerably or with whatever moral motives it was undoubtedly practised by the medical profession. He condemned it root and branch as murder in a way which would certainly not have satisfied every member of an intelligent and serious English audience. But there was no mistaking his moral conviction in the matter.

Thirdly the death penalty, on which his arguments were similar to those with which we are familiar here.

Fourthly the problem of alcoholism, which in France is not equivalent to the English problem of drunkenness. The French bore a particular moral responsibility in this respect, for they had also introduced the habit of wine-drinking in their African territories. He regarded alcoholism as a poisoning of the French race, and he was not slow to be emphatic on the subject in Touraine itself, an important vine-growing province.

Fifthly he touched on the acute housing shortage and the slum problem, whose ill-effects on children and social life he painted in vivid terms. This also was an example of spiritual murder. He touched also on the problem of social injustice and finally on the moral rights of the conscientious objector, which are not recognized by French law and which the French Protestants have been foremost in upholding.

He also had an eloquent word to say on the subject of detective stories whose general vogue he vigorously condemned in a way of which, no doubt, Calvin would have heartily approved. There was a word here about horror comics, which have not achieved in France the popularity we condemn here.

There was much more besides in Pastor Boegner's address, but space forbids any more of my notes. He also gave the address at the Sunday service in the Protestant Church, where there was a large congregation of some 500 people. There was a special anthem by the choir and a most lovely cello solo with the organ.

If I may summarize my general impressions, I would say that the Protestant Church in France is a lively, social and moral influence. Its liberal wing is strengthened rather than weakened by its association with a unified Church, which has very considerable resources, spiritual, material and academic. How devoutly to be wished that our Unitarian influence was as strong!

Rev. S. H. Mellone

As we go to press, we learn with regret of the death of the Rev. Dr. S. H. Mellone, Principal of the Unitarian College, Manchester, from 1911-1921. He was one of the outstanding scholars of the Unitarian Movement. Dr. Mellone passed away at his home, Woodford Green, Essex, on July 16. A fuller notice will appear in *The Inquirer* next week.

Presbyterian College, Carmarthen

The usual fine weather and large attendance accompanied the Closing Proceedings of the College at Carmarthen on Wednesday, June 27. His Worship the Mayor of Carmarthen was present.

Four students (including a B.D. graduate) completed the courses at the College, and the Valedictory Address was given by Professor Eric Evans (Dept. of Education, University of Wales, Cardiff).

The Deputation from the Board consisted of Dr. I. W. M. Baily, Rev. H. S. Carter, Dr. R. O. Jones (Chairman), Mr. H. I. Bush (Treasurer) and Rev. D. P. Maw (Secretary). D.P.M.

Evenham.—The Rev. John E. Bright, of Cradley, Staffordshire, has accepted the unanimous invitation of the congregation of Our St. Chapel to become their minister in succession to the Rev. Priestley Phillips. It is expected that Mr. Bright will open his ministry at Evenham early in October.

THE INQUIRER

All letters and communications for the Editor must reach the Office not later than Monday evening for publication the same week. All communications must be accompanied by the name and address of the writer.

Subscription Rates: £1 1s. 6d. per annum (post free). Those having any difficulty in obtaining copies of the paper should communicate direct with the publisher.

Address: 14 Grafton Square, London, W.C.1

TEL.: BUN. 7254 Editorial: BUN. 2912

NEWS REVIEW

NORTHERN UNITARIANS MEET

Large Crowds for Provincial Assembly of Presbyterian and Unitarian Ministers and Congregations of Lancashire and Cheshire

The chill winds of heaven blew hard through the fluted roof of Dukinfield Old Chapel as a greeting to the Provincial Assembly meeting there for Divine Worship on Wednesday, June 13, 1956.

The Rev. Harry Smith, of Hyde Chapel, Gee Cross Hyde, preached a sermon of stirring quality to a congregation of ministers and delegates drawn from all quarters of Lancashire and Cheshire which could have been little less than two hundred strong.

The preacher pointed out that a century ago Unitarians firmly believed that Christ was imitable and that they had lived and worked in all fields of activity upon that belief. Since that time a growing uneasiness had prevailed. Wars and rumours of war throughout the past century had succeeded in clouding that faith with doubt. If we wish our particular witness to be effective again we should reassert our belief that it is possible for the Spirit of Christ to be our spirit.

After luncheon the Annual Business Meeting was held in the beautifully appointed school rooms at Dukinfield.

A Civic Welcome was extended on behalf of the Mayor and Corporation of Dukinfield by the Town Clerk, Mr. D. W. Yates.

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At the beginning of his Presidential Address the Rev. S. P. Whitehouse, M.A., B.Litt., also momentarily took a backward glance saying that if we had been in a position to listen to a Presidential Address delivered by a President of this Assembly fifty years ago, no doubt, we would have felt that we were listening to something of real value! "That lucky man would have something to get his teeth into." The half century has produced vast changes. We have witnessed the dwindling in the efficacy of our church life, of the number of worshipping members and the number of Ministers. But there has been no dwindling in the purpose of our faith. There was nothing wrong with Unitarianism... if there was anything wrong at all it is with Unitarians. We need less pessimism and more optimism. Let those who want a "wailing wall" find it outside our Denomination. It is not our faith which is on trial, it is each Unitarian who is on trial. "This means You."

At the request of the Assembly the following resolution has been sent to every Unitarian Church secretary throughout the Province:

"That this Provincial Assembly of Presbyterian and Unitarian Ministers and Congregations of Lancashire and Cheshire sends greetings to all congregations who are meeting grave difficulties, especially those having little prospect of receiving the services and leadership of a settled minister. The Unitarian Ministers and delegates here assembled wish it to be known that all congregations who are struggling to keep alive in their localities our Free Religious witness, often against great difficulties, have their friendliest and sincerest understanding and sympathy. This Assembly sends to all such congregations the warmest message of fellowship and would have them know that their difficulties and problems are not forgotten but are prayerfully remembered.

The Assembly also calls upon all Congregations, particularly those with Ministers, to express this sense of fellowship by extending practical help and encouragement, especially in releasing their Ministers from time to time to preach in vacant pulpits."

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By now the Prime Minister and all Members of Parliament representing Parliamentary Divisions within the area covered by the Provincial Assembly have received a copy of the following resolution:

"That this Provincial Assembly of Presbyterian and Unitarian Ministers and Congregations of Lancashire and Cheshire places on record its profound disquiet at the dangers and genetic hazards to human health and happiness occasioned by the testing of nuclear and similar weapons and it urges Her Majesty's Government to bear in mind these hazards and dangers and to err on the side of genetic safety rather than of military expediency and to seek immediately international agreement to put an end to all such tests."

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The public meeting held after tea was perhaps one of the most useful for some years. It had the theme, "How can we Maintain our Ministry?"

With Mr. J. S. Miller of Dukinfield in the Chair and with Mr. Wynn Kenrick and the Rev. F. Cottier as leaders in discussion it was obvious from the first that the Assembly was about to experience something of outstanding importance.

Mr. Cottier gave a brief but vivid description of the way the Welfare State through its National and Local Government employees is doing, often with greater skill, what was at one time regarded as the prerogative of the Church. Often in order to justify himself the minister involves himself in too much institutional activity. On the other hand there are effective religious movements which appear to work well without a trained ministry. Where do we stand?

But where are we to expect men to come from to fill the thinning ranks? It is noticeable that a large proportion of men on our rolls to-day have not come from within our "household of faith". Are we to assume that ours is a kindly disposed movement which opens its doors wide to welcome all those who wish to enter our ministerial ranks... only to let them down gently into scepticism and despondency? The ministry is not a profession but a vocation. It was up to the lay people who claim the need for a trained ministry to see that this call is answered through their own endeavours and from their own ranks.

Mr. Wynn Kenrick approached the subject from a different point of the compass but arrived at the same conclusion. He gave as his definition of a congregation "A gathering of people who have freely come together for worship and instruction" and the people so gathered look to the minister for leadership in worship and for instruction in religious matters.

What are the colleges doing to provide men to do these and other important tasks? First, of course, they must find the possible recruits. Then it is essential that the candidates have a real vocation for the work of the ministry, that they have a reasonable educational background, that they are taught to use the "tools of the trade" and given instruction in homiletics and pastoralia. If the body of our people deeply desire a fully trained ministry then, like anything else in this life which is worth having they must be prepared to pay for it... if they want men to come into the ministry they must be prepared to remove the worries and anxieties which have led so many men either to refuse to take up the work or at some later date to contract out of the duties they had so willingly undertaken.

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Mr. George Platt of Hindley was elected President for the ensuing year.

Officers 1956-57 U.Y.P.L.

President:	Shirley E. Roberts (Stalybridge)
President-Elect:	Ivan Knowlson (Birmingham)
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"The Youth Supplement":	Geoffrey W. Petts (Colne)

UNITARIAN COLLEGE, MANCHESTER

Close of Session Proceedings

Memorable Dignity and Success

THE close of the academic session at the Unitarian College attracted a large gathering of ministers and layfolk. The College grounds looked at their best and much had been done in the College building, sadly in need of decoration though it is, to offer the visitors a well-organized and friendly welcome. The gardener had contrived the growth of a mass of glowing geraniums in the conservatory. The Library was gleaming and polished and looked in every way what it ought to be: a place of mellow dignity and intellectual fruitfulness.

For the traditional sermons by the out-going students the lecture room was packed and though sermons, unadorned and unhelped by the normal accessories of worship, present something of a trial to the aptitudes of even the most hardened student preachers, Mr. D. M. Klugel, B.A., and Mr. A. L. Finbow both transcended their difficulties and offered us utterances well worthy of the occasion.

The brevity of their discourses was commendable and left the concourse of visitors plenty of time to make a leisurely way to the McLachlan Library, which provided a truly fitting setting for the rest of the proceedings. Wending its way down the College staircase and through the College grounds, the formal procession of tutors, officers and College Visitors made a dignified spectacle and was greeted, on its entrance into the Library, with a silent show of respect and pleasure.

The President, Miss Anne D. Holt, opened the proceedings by expressing good wishes, on behalf of all, to the outgoing students. She referred to the Library's pleasant appearance, due to the labours of the Principal, Mrs. Kenworthy, and the domestic staff, the Rev. T. W. Roberts and the students. She also made a grateful reference to the contribution made to College life by the Matron, Mrs. E. M. Meldrum, who was due for retirement after 10 years of devoted service.

She now called upon the Senior Visitor, Dr. Mortimer Rowe, to deliver his official address, for which he had chosen the title "Decently and in Order". Miss Holt referred to the value and eminence of his multifarious contributions to our religious movement. She added to these his possession of a sense of fun. On occasions, indeed, he could be frankly comic and it was through such people as he that, so Miss Holt felt, being a Unitarian was not only to find the more serious satisfactions; it was also, in the best sense of the phrase, "good fun". When Dr. Rowe rose to give his address it was not long before a highly appreciative audience showed by its laughter its own just sense of Miss Holt's discerning words. Dr. Rowe has a considerable load of learning which never weighs him down and his serious outline of the progress of Unitarian worship during the past 150 years was salted with reverent humour. Indeed there were several explosions of wholehearted enjoyment. A brief résumé of his address appears elsewhere.

After the Visitor's Address the President called upon Principal Fred Kenworthy to present his report on the College Session now completed. From his review of the Session we were soon able to see that life in an academic institution offers plenty of diversity. As his predecessor often remarked, "There is always something happening in this place!" and academic responsibilities did not win immunity from such problems as burst boilers, leaking roofs and falling walls. He was tremendously grateful for the full and friendly co-operation of all concerned, with him, in the life of the College and its administration.

The Session began in October last with seven full-time theological students in residence, two lay pastors taking the G.A. course and one special student, the Rev. S. R. Butler. In addition there had been 11 students from other faculties in residence, a number increased to 12 during the Summer Term when one full-time theological student, Mr. P. Jones, had felt

compelled, for personal reasons, to withdraw from his course. It was hoped that this withdrawal would only be temporary.

The Principal paid a special tribute to the lay pastors, who had proved to be among the best students, both in College and University courses. He was strongly of the opinion that the dividing line between success and failure was not that between full-time and part-time study. Much depended on a man's ability and powers of application. Before turning to the more academic side of the Session, he reminded us of the invaluable service which the College renders to local churches, in 35 of which the students had conducted no less than 333 services. Moreover he had plenty of evidence that the students' competence in preaching and in the conduct of worship was highly appreciated. His task of finding student supplies would be all the harder next year with fewer full-time students.

At the University Mr. D. M. Klugel, B.A., had completed all courses for the B.D. degree. His was the third B.D. to be obtained since the War and it was hoped that Mr. Kenneth Wright, B.A., with three subjects this year on the credit side, would in due time obtain the fourth.

Mr. W. McMillan had now obtained his University Certificate in Theology, having passed in his remaining five subjects. His success was quite outstanding since, with the five subjects, he had obtained four distinctions—a feat not achieved by a student of the College since 1925. Indeed the University had awarded only five distinctions altogether this year in this Certificate and Mr. McMillan had collected four of them.

Also at the University Mr. D. C. Doel, a lay pastor in charge of two churches, had satisfactorily completed a year of his studies for the M.A. degree and the Principal looked forward to the successful completion of a task—not attempted for many years under these conditions—which would surely bring credit to the College.

In the College Sessional examinations Mr. T. Wardle (a lay pastor) had secured three firsts, Mr. Butler a first class and two seconds, Mr. Klugel a first, Mr. McMillan a first, Mr. Smith a first and two seconds, Mr. Doel two seconds and Mr. Wright a second class.

Seven non-theological students had taken their finals this year and six had been awarded degrees. Prizes were awarded to students as follows:

Street-Laycock Prizes for Comparative Religion: Messrs. McMillan and Wright.

George Thomas Prize for Doctrine: Mr. McMillan.

George Thomas Prize for Philosophy: Mr. Wardle.

Sharpe Prize for Proficiency in Biblical Studies: Messrs. McMillan and Klugel.

Elliott Prize for General Excellence: Mr. D. Smith.

Rawson Essay Prize: Mr. D. C. Doel.

Turning now to the two students who had completed their courses the Principal expressed his good wishes to Mr. Klugel and Mr. Finbow. Mr. Klugel had taken the full College course of six years and hoped soon to be settled in a ministerial appointment. Mr. Finbow, who was shortly to be inducted as minister of the Todmorden Church, had spent his final year of study at the College after having completed three years at Manchester College, Oxford.

After a moving prayer and benediction pronounced by the Rev. Joyce Hazlehurst, M.A., B.D., herself a former student of the College and now a member of its teaching staff, the proceedings drew to a close. The procession re-formed and as it moved out of the McLachlan Library one felt that yet another College Session had been rounded off with memorable dignity and encouraging success.

Tea was provided for the visitors at the College and at 7 p.m. the Valedictory Service, to bid farewell to the two outgoing students, was held at Brookfield Church, Gorton. It was an impressive occasion and attracted a large gathering.

(Continued on page 244)

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(Continued from page 242)

The preacher was the Rev. Leonard Mason, B.A., B.D., Minister of the Great Meeting, Leicester, who, in what was a striking utterance, reminded the two new ministers of the changing human conditions to which they would have to address themselves—conditions never precisely the same from one generation to another, as he vividly illustrated from his own experience.

ABD.

"DECENTLY AND IN ORDER"

A summary of the Visitor's Address by Dr. Mortimer Rowe

Dr. Rowe unfolded the story of our Service Books, from that of Theophilus Lindsey at Essex Chapel (1774) to "Orders of Worship" (1932) and "Prayers of Faith and Fellowship" (1952). Time forbade more than a general description of outstanding 19th Century examples.

The highlight of the earlier period was reached in the Rev. J. J. Tayler's "Forms of Prayer" (1839); but a great advance upon this and all previous volumes was marked by Dr. Thos. Sadler's "Common Prayer for Christian Worship" (1861), to which Dr. Martineau contributed the famous 9th and 10th Services from his own gifted pen.

Dissatisfaction with the "right-wing" character of the latter caused a "left-wing" version of it twenty years later in the form of the "Ten Services of Public Prayer" (1879), somewhat hurriedly prepared by Dr. Martineau under the Rev. P. H. Wicksteed's persuasion.

Meanwhile, in 1878, appeared a noteworthy "Book of Prayer" by the Rev. Crompton Jones. This was perhaps not very successful for congregational use, but it was a treasury of Unitarian devotion upon which many later books drew heavily, including our present "Orders of Worship" and "Prayers of Faith and Fellowship". These two modern volumes, Dr. Rowe remarked in conclusion, were put forth—to quote St. Paul—"not as having dominion over your faith, but as the helpers of your joy".

Forest Gate and Ilford: The Induction Service of Mr. T. E. Dalton to the joint-ministry of the Forest Gate and Ilford churches took place in the Ilford church on Saturday, July 7, 1956, at 3 p.m. The day was fine and the church crowded and everyone seemed intent upon enjoying the service to the full—the

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singing was voluminous and hearty. It gave the lie to those who imagine and surmise that religion, in its real sense, has had its day and being taken by a more materialistic conception thereof. The Rev. P. J. Chalk, the L.D.P.A. President, conducted the service with the Rev. Wilfred Waddington, B.A., B.D., and the Rev. K. C. Treacher. Mr. T. E. Dalton in reply, accepting the call, said so far as within him lies the power, without fear or favour, he would at all times endeavour to do what he felt was right and proper in the interest of the church.

After the service the whole congregation, numbering about 170, adjourned to the new hall and before refreshments, listened to a selection of messages read by the Secretary, Mr. G. Wincher—time preventing the reading of the whole bunch. Rev. John Kitchin, who presided, then asked the local V.I.P.s to say a few words—the first being our local M.P., Mr. C. E. Cooper, who expressed his pleasure being present and said he recognized faces he had seen many times before in the audience; then Ald. Falcate spoke, Miss Stevenson, London President of the Women's League, and Mr. Kitchin on behalf of the General Assembly.

More than 50 stayed on to take part in the jubiliations of the Social Evening which followed and which closed at 10.30 p.m.—wending their way homewards, everyone feeling the better for having taken part in these epoch-making proceedings. A.C.

Portsmouth: Members of the Women's League of the new John Pounds Memorial Church at Portsmouth organized a highly successful Garden Party on Saturday, June 30. This was held in the grounds of "Hamidene" at Havant, the beautiful home of Mr. and Mrs. Knight, Visitors, who were welcomed by Mr. J. R. Sturges, Lay Minister of the Portsmouth Church, included the Rev. J. W. and Mrs. Dumble of Poole, members of the Bournemouth, Ringwood and Southampton congregations, and some forty members and friends from Brighton, including the Rev. and Mrs. John Rowland, Mr. W. J. Werry (Chairman), Miss Olive Dingle (Secretary), and other officials and committee members. This constituted the Annual Ousting of Christ Church (Unitarian), Brighton, and the members, after spending a happy time in the garden at Havant, were taken over the well-nigh completed buildings of the new church, accompanied by Mr. Sturges, and Mr. E. A. Down, the architect.

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